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Viewing cable 06MEXICO3907, LOOKING FOR FRAUD IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES?

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Understanding cables

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06MEXICO3907	2006-07-14 18:01	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Mexico

Appears in these articles:

<http://wikileaks.jornada.com.mx/notas/fe-ciega-de-washington-en-el-ife>

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R 141801Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2159
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1207
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MEXICO 003907

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [MX](#)
SUBJECT: LOOKING FOR FRAUD IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES?
REF: A. A) MEXICO 3834

[B. B\) MEXICO 3422](#)

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL CHIEF ALAN MELTZER, REASONS: 1.4(B/D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a July 12 meeting with poloffs, officials of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) offered an impassioned defense of their work in conducting the July 2 presidential elections. Although they had not yet seen the specific complaints submitted by the PRD (or, for that matter, those of the PAN), they described in great detail the safeguards incorporated into IFE's election process, many of which were previously described at an SRE briefing for the diplomatic corps (ref A). They refuted in detail several of the specific allegations of fraud or irregularities singled out by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) in recent news conferences. On July 13 we met with former IFE head Jose Woldenberg, who opined that the election appeared to have been conducted with complete transparency. He doubted AMLO's allegations of widespread fraud, insisting that the dispute simply reflected the understandable frustration felt by the second place candidate in a very narrow race. He predicted that the likeliest resolution would be that the electoral tribunal (TEPJF) would order a partial recount of ballots, and that he expected such a recount to confirm Calderon's victory. Both contacts deeply lamented the damage that the allegations of fraud were doing to IFE's hard-won credibility. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On July 12, poloffs met with IFE Counselor Alejandra Latapi and IFE Director for International Affairs Manuel Carrillo to discuss the most recent developments in the dispute over the results of the Mexican presidential election. From the outset of our meeting, Latapi asserted that the election had been exemplary and that in several important respects, the electoral system functioned even more effectively this year than in previous years. She noted, for example, that out of the over 130,000 precincts planned nationwide, all but 11 actually operated on Election Day, including every precinct planned for the conflictive state of Chiapas; in 2000, IFE was unable to set up 104 of the precincts planned nationwide.

Seeking to Set the Record Straight

[1](#)3. (SBU) In addition to detailing the considerable safeguards protecting virtually every step of the election process, she sought to refute several of the specific allegations raised by AMLO in recent press conferences. She first sought to rebut AMLO's allegation, based upon a video he showed at a recent press conference, that ballot box stuffing had occurred in the state of Guanajuato. She explained that the person seen in the video depositing multiple ballots in a ballot box -- who in fact was the precinct president -- was simply relocating to the correct box Chamber of Deputies ballots that inadvertently had been

deposited in the presidential ballot box. She noted that such an action was legal and that all of the party representatives -- including that of the PRD -- were aware of the action at the time and did not object. (Note: AMLO subsequently asserted that the PRD precinct representative may have been bought off by the PAN, a charge strenuously denied by the 19 year old woman who volunteered as his representative in that precinct. End note.)

14. (SBU) As for AMLO's allegation that a discrepancy in the tally sheet of a ballot box in Queretaro cost him votes, Latapi said this discrepancy had been raised during the district retabulation, the ballot box had been opened, the votes recounted, and the discrepancy corrected. She noted this was precisely the reason why the electoral law provided for a district retabulation, and was an example of the system working properly. She also sought to refute an allegation of fraud in Coahuila, where the PRD identified a temporary IFE employee claiming to have been pressured to change vote tallies to Calderon's advantage, and to have seen Calderon's vote totals grow immediately after an alleged power outage. Latapi said that upon investigation, IFE found numerous contradictions in his story. Rather than being hired as a "capturista" to enter vote totals in the IFE data base, as he had claimed, he had been hired for manual labor; in the early morning hours on election night, he was asked to briefly assist the district council by recording results being dictated for a second, unofficial vote tally. Members of the

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district council, as well as representatives of four political parties, certified that he never had access to the official tally sheets and that there had been no power outage during the evening.

15. (SBU) Finally, Latapi addressed the PRD's charge that IFE had improperly opened ballot boxes being stored under military guard in Tabasco, Puebla and Sonora. She asserted that the electoral law did not preclude its reopening of these ballot boxes, that they were reopened (and later resealed) in the presence of the IFE district council and party representatives, and that IFE had ordered them to be opened because the PRD (and in some cases, the PAN) had requested copies of tally sheets and incident reports therein so as to be able to prepare its electoral challenge. She emphasized that in no case did the district councils open the sealed envelopes containing the executed ballots. (Note: Former IFE President Jose Woldenberg told poloff that although he believed IFE acted in good faith in opening the ballot boxes, IFE would have been well-advised not to do so without a court order, given the toxic, post-election climate. In fact, late on July 12, IFE announced it would not open additional further ballot boxes pending a TEPJF order. End note.)

Allegations of Fraud May Undermine Electoral System

16. (C) Lapati told poloffs that her greatest concern was that the recent allegations of electoral fraud risked undermining citizen management of elections, which is the very foundation of the Mexican electoral system. She reminded us that each voting precinct is staffed by four randomly selected and trained citizens, who were responsible not only for checking voters' credentials and administering the voting process but also for counting the votes. Because the electoral framework was based on the principle that the votes should be counted by citizens, rather than by civil servants, the law authorized recounts only in the case of an inconsistency or apparent error. She feared that the recent allegations of electoral fraud would undermine public trust in this citizen-based system, and was also concerned that electoral workers could be harassed in their communities, making it difficult to recruit volunteers in the future. She also noted that PRD demands that IFE district councils recount the votes in every ballot box were inconsistent with

TEPJF jurisprudence. The TEPJF has previously annulled lower level elections where numerous ballot boxes had been recounted without the legal criteria being met; in order to avoid risking the annulment of this election, IFE had issued strict instructions to recount votes only where the statutory criteria were met.

Woldenberg Sees No Evidence of Widespread Fraud

¶7. (C) Former IFE head and well-respected commentator Jose Woldenberg told us that while errors undoubtedly had been made in the vote count, he is aware of no evidence of an organized plan to commit election fraud. Indeed, he believes a widespread conspiracy to commit fraud would be impossible given IFE's numerous safeguards. He characterized as "fantasy" the PRD's allegation that the IFE's preliminary count (PREP) software contained an algorithm that deducted votes from AMLO, noting that every element of data entered into the PREP could be corroborated against vote totals on the tally sheets. He thought that overall, IFE had conducted the elections very well and that in fact, there were few differences between the way it conducted this year's election and the way it conducted the 2000 election. The only significant differences were that this year, the IFE adopted stricter standards for incorporating vote totals into the PREP, meaning that more precincts were excluded from the PREP for closer examination by the district councils, and that in 2000 IFE had decided it would release the results of its quick count on election night no matter how narrow the margin between the candidates.

¶8. (C) Woldenberg's biggest concern over the present situation is the damage unnecessarily being done to IFE's reputation by what he considers unfounded allegations of fraud. He noted that it had taken years for Mexico to establish a credible electoral system and that no matter how the TEPJF resolves the present dispute, a core of AMLO true believers -- he called them a "community of faith" -- will

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always be convinced that IFE orchestrated or abetted fraud.

What's Next???

¶9. (C) Woldenberg sees the present situation playing out in one of three possible scenarios. The most likely is that the TEPJF -- perhaps after ordering a partial recount -- will confirm Calderon as the winner; he doubts the TEPJF would order a complete, nationwide recount. The second scenario, which he considers highly improbable, is that a partial or total recount would reverse the election results, resulting in AMLO's election. The third scenario, which he also considers highly improbable, is that the TEPJF would annul the entire election. (Note: As we have previously reported (ref B), TEPJF magistrates told poloffs several weeks before the election that they would be very reluctant to annul the entire election. End note.)

¶10. (C) Woldenberg believes that however the TEPJF rules, its decision would soon end the stand-off. Assuming the TEPJF confirms Calderon as President, AMLO's base of support would quickly dwindle, although he might manage to convoke one or two post-TEPJF demonstrations. He argued that the PRD was essentially a party of "institutionality" with a great deal invested in the system, particularly now that it has emerged as the second force in Congress. He concluded that it had a great deal to lose if it continued to press its case extra-institutionally, and that much of the support AMLO retains in the party hierarchy would melt away as senior PRD office holders sought to protect their own interests.

Comment: AMLO Playing the Wrong Card?

¶11. (C) Frankly, in focusing on fraud where little or none likely exists, AMLO not only is damaging one of Mexico's most credible political institutions, but he may be undermining the small chance he has of reversing the electoral results. While we have seen no credible evidence of fraud, there is some evidence that the incidence of human error was greater in his strongholds, presumably because the level of education in those regions tends to be lower: among the more than 2.5 million votes excluded from the PREP but included in the final results (ref A), AMLO appears to have out-pollled Calderon by some 150,000 votes. Although we highly doubt a recount would find enough errors to overcome Calderon's current 243,000 lead, we suspect he is more likely to find significant errors than significant fraud. For over 10 years, AMLO has advanced his political career in part by knowing how to take political advantage of situations in which he has been wronged. In the present case, however, his tendency to consider himself the victim of a conspiracy may turn out to be his Achilles heel.

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